

Parental Pressure on Learning Autonomy: Psychological Impacts on Children in the Context of Islamic Religious Education

Aisyah Dalimunthe ✉, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

✉ 251003003@student.ar-raniry.ac.id

Abstract: Parental pressure in education is often intended to improve a child's academic performance. However, excessive pressure can affect students' learning autonomy and psychological well-being. This study aims to analyze the forms of parental pressure that affect children's learning autonomy, examine the resulting psychological impacts, and analyze the balance between parental involvement and the development of learning autonomy from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education. This study employs a qualitative approach using library research. Data were obtained through a review of various scientific articles, books, and relevant literature sources. Data were analyzed using content analysis techniques through the processes of data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that parental pressure generally takes the form of high academic expectations, psychological control, and demands for achievement, which can hinder children's learning autonomy. Such pressure leads to increased anxiety, academic stress, low self-esteem, and a decline in students' psychological well-being. From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, parental involvement should be balanced and grounded in love, setting a good example, and recognizing the child's potential in order to optimally support their academic development and psychological well-being.

Keywords: parental pressure, learning autonomy, psychological impact, Islamic Religious Education, mental health.

Received June 15, 2026; **Accepted** June 20, 2026; **Published** June 22, 2026

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing academic demands in modern education have led some parents to adopt a parenting style focused on academic achievement. Although parental involvement is a key factor in a child's academic success, excessive academic pressure can actually hinder the development of learning autonomy and affect students' psychological well-being. High parental expectations regarding children's academic performance often lead to controlling behaviors that limit children's freedom in making learning choices. This situation can affect the development of learning autonomy, which is a crucial aspect in fostering students' intrinsic motivation and independence. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), support for autonomy is a basic psychological need that contributes to students' psychological well-being and academic success. Conversely, an environment that lacks support for autonomy and tends to be controlling can hinder the fulfillment of students'

basic psychological needs, ultimately leading to a decline in psychological well-being and academic adjustment. (Kritikou & Giovazolias, 2022).

The phenomenon of increasing academic pressure on children has become an issue that is receiving growing attention in the field of education. Fierce academic competition, the demand for high grades, and parents' expectations that their children achieve the best possible results often place children in highly stressful situations. According to the World Health Organization approximately 14% of adolescents experience mental health disorders, with anxiety and depression being the most common conditions. In Indonesia, the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey reported an increasing prevalence of emotional and mental health problems among school-aged children (World Health Organization, 2025). Various studies show that controlling parental involvement is associated with an increased risk of psychological disorders in children and adolescents, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, and academic stress. A meta-analysis conducted by (Liu et al., 2024) indicates that inappropriate patterns of parental involvement can contribute to the emergence of depressive symptoms in adolescents. This finding suggests that parental support in education must take into account children's psychological well-being, rather than being solely focused on academic achievement.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the relationship between parents and children should be built on the principles of compassion, balance (*tawazun*), and respect for the child's innate nature (*fitrah*) and individual potential. Islamic education does not only emphasize intellectual achievement, but also pays attention to the holistic development of students' emotional, spiritual, and social aspects. Parents bear responsibility as the primary educators who guide their children through exemplary behavior, wise advice, and proportionate support (Arlina et al., 2023). Therefore, excessive academic pressure contradicts the goals of Islamic education, which prioritizes the wellbeing (*masalah*) and optimal development of children. Education that places too much emphasis on control without considering children's psychological needs has the potential to hinder the formation of learning independence and students' mental health.

A number of studies show that autonomy support from parents contributes positively to students' intrinsic motivation, learning engagement, and academic achievement. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, autonomy support helps fulfill students' basic psychological needs, thereby fostering the development of more independent and adaptive learning motivation (Bureau et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In contrast, controlling parental involvement tends to be associated with increased psychological pressure, frustration of autonomy needs, and a decline in students' psychological wellbeing (Manindjo et al., 2023). Furthermore, positive parental support has been shown to help students cope with academic stress more adaptively and improve their wellbeing (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic education, parenting patterns based on compassion (*rahmah*), exemplary role-modeling (*uswah hasanah*), and proportionate guidance are considered more effective in supporting children's psychological development compared to authoritarian approaches (Siregar et al., 2026). Therefore, parental involvement in education needs to take into account the balance between providing academic support and meeting children's psychological needs.

Although various studies have examined parental involvement, learning motivation, and students' mental health, there are three research gaps. First, most studies have focused on the influence of parental support on academic achievement, while research on parental pressure as a form of psychological control over learning autonomy remains limited. Second, the integration between the concept of learning autonomy in Self-Determination Theory and the values of Islamic Religious Education has not been widely explored. Third, the dominance of quantitative approaches has resulted in a lack of conceptual studies through literature reviews that could provide a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of this phenomenon.

The novelty of this research lies in its effort to integrate the concept of learning autonomy from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory with the principles of Islamic

Religious Education to analyze the psychological impact of parental pressure on children. Unlike previous research, which has tended to focus more on quantitative relationships between variables, this research employs a literature review approach to build a conceptual understanding of the balance between parental involvement, children's autonomy needs, and the values of Islamic education.

Based on the above description, this research aims to: first, analyze the forms of parental pressure that affect children's learning autonomy; second, examine the psychological impacts arising from parental pressure on children's development; third, analyze the concept of balance between parental involvement and the development of children's learning autonomy from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education. The results of this research are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of PAI studies that are responsive to students' mental health issues, as well as serve as practical considerations for parents and educators in creating a learning environment that optimally supports children's psychological development.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research design. This approach was chosen because the research aims to understand and analyze in depth the phenomenon of parental pressure on learning autonomy and the psychological impacts experienced by children from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education. Through literature review, the researcher can examine various relevant concepts, theories, and previous research findings to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study. The data sources in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from scientific articles relevant to the research theme. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from books, proceedings, and other scientific documents relevant to the focus of the research,

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis techniques. The analysis process was carried out through several stages, namely selecting and reducing data according to the research focus, grouping findings based on main themes such as forms of parental pressure, psychological impacts on children, and the concept of learning autonomy in Islamic Religious Education, followed by data interpretation to obtain a deeper understanding. To maintain data validity, this research applies source triangulation by comparing various relevant and credible references so that the research results obtained can be scientifically justified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Parental Pressure Affecting Children's Learning Autonomy

Parental pressure on children in the context of education does not always appear in the form of direct academic demands, but also manifests through various forms of psychological control that can limit the development of children's learning autonomy. This pressure is generally manifested through high academic expectations, demands to achieve certain achievements, restrictions on learning choices, and the use of controlling parenting strategies. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), excessively controlling parental behavior can hinder the fulfillment of children's basic psychological needs, particularly the need for autonomy, thereby potentially decreasing intrinsic motivation in learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

High academic expectations are one of the most commonly found forms of pressure in parent-child relationships. Parents often view academic success as the main indicator of their child's future success, thereby encouraging the child to achieve certain performance standards. Although realistic expectations can serve as a source of motivation, excessive demands can instead create psychological pressure for the child. A study by (Pienyu et al., 2024) found that perceived academic pressure from parents has a positive relationship with

increased anxiety and decreased general health in adolescents facing competitive exams. These findings indicate that parental pressure not only affects academic aspects, but also the child's overall psychological condition.

In addition to academic expectations, another commonly found form of pressure is psychological control. Psychological control is characterized by parental behavior that seeks to control the child's thoughts, feelings, and decisions through emotional manipulation, inducing guilt, or threats of rejection. From the SDT perspective, this type of parenting pattern is a controlling parenting style that can hinder the development of learning autonomy. The child has fewer opportunities to make independent decisions related to their learning process, so that learning motivation tends to be based on external pressure rather than internal awareness. As a result, the child becomes more prone to dependence on external validation and has difficulty developing self-regulation in learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

In contrast, parental involvement that is autonomy-supportive has been shown to have a positive impact on the development of children's learning autonomy. (Lerner et al., 2022) found that autonomy-supportive parental involvement contributes to increased learning motivation and academic achievement among students. Parents who give their children opportunities to express their opinions, respect their children's choices, and provide rational reasons for the rules they apply tend to help children develop intrinsic motivation and better learning responsibility. This finding is in line with a meta-analysis by (Bureau et al., 2022), which shows that autonomy support from the social environment has a positive relationship with the fulfillment of basic psychological needs and autonomous learning motivation.

From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, parental involvement in children's education should be based on the principles of compassion (rahmah), balance (tawazun), and respect for the child's individual potential. Islamic education does not encourage authoritarian and oppressive parenting patterns, but rather emphasizes the importance of wise guidance, exemplary role-modeling, and providing space for children to develop according to their abilities and developmental stages. Therefore, excessive academic pressure is not in line with the goals of Islamic education, which is oriented toward forming individuals who are balanced intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. Thus, parental involvement needs to be directed toward supporting children's learning autonomy without neglecting the function of proportionate supervision and guidance.

Psychological Impacts of Parental Pressure on Children

Excessive parental pressure in the academic context can have various negative psychological impacts on children. This pressure not only affects learning performance, but is also related to psychological well-being, mental health, and children's ability to manage emotions. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a controlling environment can hinder the fulfillment of basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these psychological needs are not met, children tend to experience a decrease in intrinsic motivation, increased emotional pressure, and the emergence of various maladaptive psychological symptoms (Ryan & Deci, 2020). One of the most commonly found psychological impacts is an increase in anxiety levels in children. Parental pressure to achieve certain academic standards can cause children to feel a fear of failure and worry about being unable to meet their family's expectations. A study by (Liu et al., 2024), through a meta-analysis, shows that parenting patterns characterized by psychological control and high academic demands have a significant relationship with increased depressive symptoms in adolescents. These findings indicate that continuous pressure can become a risk factor for mental health disorders, especially when children lack adequate emotional support to cope with these demands.

In addition to anxiety, parental pressure is also associated with increased academic stress in children. Academic stress arises when the demands received by students are

perceived to exceed their abilities or available resources to cope with them. (Pienyu et al., 2024) found that adolescents' perception of academic pressure from parents is positively related to higher levels of stress and anxiety as well as decreased general health. This condition indicates that parental involvement that is too outcome-oriented can reduce positive learning experiences and increase the psychological burden on students.

Another impact that frequently emerges is a decline in children's self-esteem and self-confidence. Children who grow up in environments with high academic expectations tend to associate their self-worth with academic achievement. When they fail to meet their parents' expectations, children may experience feelings of worthlessness, perceive themselves as incompetent, and develop a negative self-concept. Within the SDT framework, this condition reflects the unmet need for competence, namely the individual's need to feel capable and effective in interacting with their environment (Ryan & Deci, 2020). As a result, children become more vulnerable to various psychological problems, including decreased learning motivation and dissatisfaction with themselves.

Excessive parental pressure can also hinder the development of children's autonomy and self-regulation in learning. Children who are accustomed to being strictly directed in determining their goals, strategies, and academic decisions tend to experience difficulty making independent decisions. (Simbolon et al., 2023) found that autonomy support from parents contributes positively to students' intrinsic motivation, whereas high psychological control actually decreases students' active engagement in the learning process. This indicates that learning autonomy plays an important role in building children's psychological resilience and their ability to adapt to various academic challenges.

From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, mental health is an integral part of educational goals oriented toward forming individuals who are balanced in their spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social aspects. Islam teaches the importance of creating a family environment based on compassion (rahmah), gentleness, and respect for individual abilities. Parenting patterns that cause excessive pressure are not in line with the principles of Islamic education, which emphasize ease (taysir) and avoiding burdensome actions. (Arlina et al., 2023) emphasized that the role of parents in Islamic education should be realized through guidance, motivation, and exemplary role-modeling that support children's optimal development, rather than through pressure that could disrupt their psychological health.

Thus, these various findings indicate that excessive parental pressure can have negative effects on children's psychological condition, ranging from increased anxiety and academic stress to decreased self-esteem and learning autonomy. Therefore, a pattern of parental involvement that better supports children's psychological needs is needed, so that the educational process is not only oriented toward academic achievement, but also toward the creation of comprehensive mental health for students.

The Concept of Balance between Parental Involvement and the Development of Children's Learning Autonomy from the Perspective of Islamic Religious Education

The results of the literature review indicate that parental involvement in children's education is an important factor in supporting students' academic success and psychological development. However, this involvement needs to be carried out proportionately so that it does not turn into pressure that hinders the development of children's learning autonomy. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), ideal parental involvement is autonomy-supportive, namely providing support, direction, and guidance without eliminating children's opportunities to make choices and develop responsibility for their own learning process (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Thus, the balance between guidance and the provision of space for autonomy becomes an important aspect in creating a healthy learning environment for children.

Autonomy support from parents can be realized through giving children opportunities to express their opinions, respecting their interests and potential, and involving children in decision-making related to their learning activities. Parental

involvement that supports autonomy contributes to increased intrinsic motivation and academic achievement among students (Lerner et al., 2022). Children who receive autonomy support tend to have better self-regulation, higher self-confidence, and a more optimal ability to face academic challenges. In contrast, overly controlling parenting patterns can create dependency, hinder learning independence, and increase the risk of psychological problems.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education, the balance between parental involvement and the development of children's learning autonomy can be understood through the principle of *tawazun* (balance) in the educational process. Islam teaches that parents have a responsibility to educate, guide, and direct their children toward goodness, while still paying attention to each individual's innate nature (*fitrah*) and potential. Effective education is not education based on coercion, but education carried out through an approach of compassion (*rahmah*), wise advice (*mau'izhah hasanah*), and exemplary role-modeling (*uswah hasanah*). These principles indicate that Islam recognizes the importance of providing direction while also respecting the development of children's independence in learning.

This concept of balance is also in line with the goals of Islamic Religious Education, which are not only oriented toward academic achievement but also toward forming a complete personality (*insan kamil*). Islamic education aims to develop the entirety of human potential intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social aspects in a harmonious manner. Therefore, excessive academic pressure that disregards children's psychological condition contradicts the goals of Islamic education. (Arlina et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2026) explain that the application of Islamic values in education plays an important role in supporting students' mental health by strengthening the values of patience, gratitude, self-control, and positive social support. Thus, children's psychological health needs to be a primary consideration in the educational process within the family environment.

In addition, balanced parental involvement can also be achieved through open and supportive communication. Parents need to understand that each child has different abilities, interests, and learning speeds. Therefore, academic expectations should be adjusted to the child's conditions and capacities. A more dialogical approach allows children to feel valued, heard, and supported in facing various academic challenges. From the SDT perspective, a warm relationship between parents and children can fulfill the need for relatedness, which in turn contributes to increased intrinsic motivation and children's psychological health (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

The findings of this study indicate that the balance between parental involvement and the development of children's learning autonomy is an important factor in creating a healthy and sustainable educational process. Parental involvement based on autonomy support and the values of Islamic Religious Education can help children develop more independent learning motivation, enhance psychological resilience, and reduce the negative impacts of academic pressure. Therefore, parents need to prioritize parenting patterns that are supportive, communicative, and oriented toward children's optimal development, rather than solely toward academic achievement. These findings also reinforce that the integration between the concept of learning autonomy in Self-Determination Theory and the principles of Islamic Religious Education can serve as a conceptual foundation for building family education practices that are more humanistic and responsive to students' psychological needs.

CONCLUSION

Parental pressure on children's learning autonomy commonly manifests through high academic expectations, psychological control, and persistent demands for achievement, conditions that constrain children's opportunities to cultivate responsibility and intrinsic motivation in learning and, in turn, hinder the development of autonomous learning itself. When such pressure becomes excessive, it tends to heighten anxiety and academic stress,

erode self-esteem, and gradually undermine children's psychological well-being, while also weakening their capacity for self-regulation and sustained learning motivation. Viewed through the lens of Islamic Religious Education, parental involvement should instead be exercised in a balanced manner, grounded in compassion, exemplary role-modeling, and genuine respect for each child's potential. Such an approach not only safeguards learning autonomy but also lays the foundation for raising students who are independent, responsible, and psychologically healthy.

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